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New England's Young Adult Population Lags Rest Of Nation, Carsey Report Finds

Trend Is "Alarming" For Impact On Economic Future

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DURHAM, N.H. -- The population of young adults (25 – 34) in all New England states declined much more sharply than the national average from 1990 to 2004, a new fact sheet from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire finds. During that time period, the population of young adults in New England declined nearly 25 percent, compared to the national average decline of 7 percent. While New England's growth lags the national average for all age cohorts, this decline in the young adult cohort is the most alarming, says report author Ross Gittell, James R. Carter Professor of Management at UNH and a senior fellow at the Carsey Institute.

"New England's economic future will shape and be shaped by demographic trends in the region, and there are some disturbing patterns emerging showing a decline in the young adult population," says Gittell, who analyzed data recently available from the U.S. Census American Community Survey. "Businesses need a dynamic labor force that includes a pool of young adult workers. Young adults also make the region a vibrant and interesting place to live, contributing to cultural, intellectual and social life. And young families support local schools and demand a strong educational system."

The region's population has grown less than the national average over the last 15 years, increasing 8 percent compared to an 18 percent increase nationally. In the young adult cohort, all the New England states are among the bottom 10 of the 50 states in population change and all the states in the region have lost one-fifth or more of their young adult populations. The decline is region-wide – all 67 counties in New England, with the exception of Nantucket County in Massachusetts, experienced some decline in the young adult cohort.

The decline in young adults in the New England states contrasts sharply with the greater than 10 percent growth in this cohort in seven of the Western Mountain, Northwest and Southeast States – Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, Georgia and Oregon.

In the fact sheet, Gittell notes that some of New England's population changes are attributable to predictable demographic shifts, such as the aging of the large baby boom population who, by 2004, were no longer young adults.

The Carsey Institute urges leaders to pay attention to these population trends and their impact on the future labor force, economy and character of the New England region. "Younger workers provide the economic foundation for the future strength and resilience of the region's businesses. They provide a critical pool of hard working, entry level workers for businesses in all industries, and often bring fresh ideas, new skills, and energy to the workplace," he says.

"They make the region more interesting, more dynamic and can be a magnet that attracts others to come and visit and live in the region, both young and old."

The complete fact sheet can be downloaded at the Carsey Institute's Web site:
www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu.

The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire conducts research and analysis on the challenges facing families and communities in New Hampshire, New England, and the nation. The Carsey Institute sponsors independent, interdisciplinary research that documents trends and conditions affecting families and communities, providing valuable information and analysis to policymakers, practitioners, the media and the general public. Through this work, the Carsey Institute contributes to public dialogue on policies that encourage social mobility and sustain healthy equitable communities. The Carsey Institute was established in May 2002 with a generous gift from UNH alumna and noted television producer Marcy Carsey.